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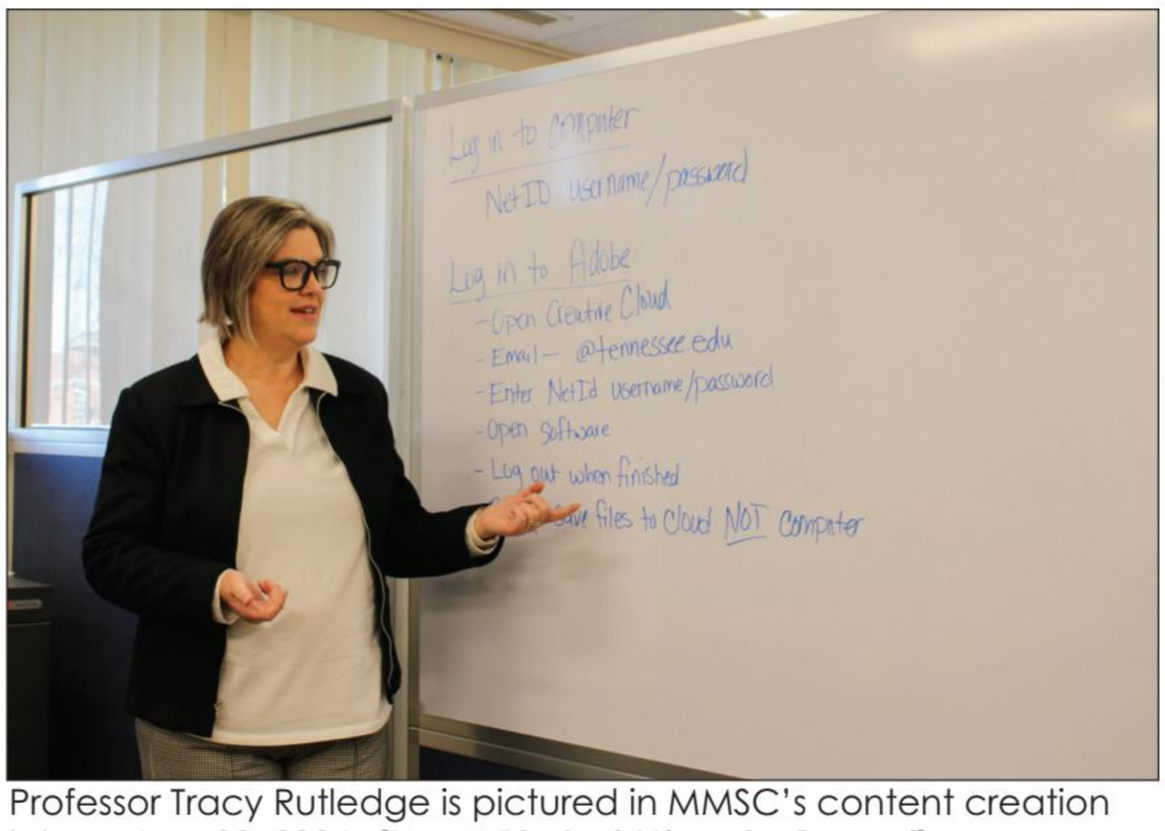
The Independent Voice of the University of Tennessee at Martin

MMSC Chair changes

Robert Nanney steps down after 25 years, Tracy Rutledge embraces new leadership role



Professor Tracy Rutledge is pictured in MMSC's content creation lab on Jan. 22, 2026. ***(Pacer Photo / Miranda Conrad)***

Professor Robert Nanney in his new office in Gooch Hall on Jan. 22, 2026. ***(Pacer Photo / Chloe Kent)***

Ella Hasty | Pacer Staff

From a student intern for University Relations to the new Mass Media and Strategic Communications (MMSC) Department Chair, Tracy Rutledge's journey at UT Martin has come full circle.

Rutledge is currently in her 18th year of teaching at UT Martin, but her ties to the campus extend far beyond her time as a professor. As department chair, Rutledge will oversee a range of responsibilities, from showing prospective students around the department during Preview Day to coordinating the core schedule for the next semester. Former chair Robert Nanney stepped down from the position Jan. 1, but remains on faculty as a professor.

As a native of Dresden, Tennessee, Weakley County is home to Rutledge. She came to UT Martin as an undergraduate and graduated from the MMSC department with a degree in Public Relations in 1997. During her undergraduate studies, she was a publications intern for University Relations. Upon her graduation, a position opened, and she served as the publications coordinator for four years.

"In a lot of ways, this is home," Rutledge said.

After earning her master's degree from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in 2000 and Ph.D. from the University of Memphis in 2010, Rutledge returned to the classroom. She has also been the program coordinator of the M.A. in Strategic Communication since 2015.

As she steps into her new position, she appreciates that she can remain connected to the students. Across the campus, each department chair is in the classroom with students.

"I would not have agreed to it if they told me I couldn't be in the classroom," she said. "I love the classroom."

For Rutledge, hearing student conversations and seeing their daily challenges firsthand helps her make informed decisions and look for areas of improvement.

See RUTLEDGE (pg 4) for continued story

Ryleigh Ulen | Pacer Staff

After more than 25 years, Robert Nanney stepped down on Jan. 1 as the chair of the Department of Mass Media and Strategic Communication at the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Nanney, currently in his 34th year working for the university, began his career at UT Martin in 1992 as an assistant professor of communications. When the department chair position opened in 2000, he took the position as one of the few faculty members who had doctoral degrees at the time. Though the position was not one that he sought out, he recognized the chance to serve students, which has always been a core value for both Nanney and the department.

"We are student centered," Nanney said. "Together we all try to find ways to serve the students and prepare them well for an ever-changing media world out there. The opportunity to constantly do that with the best staff and faculty on campus has been what has motivated me and been the most rewarding."

Even while working in an ever-changing field such as communications, student success has always remained the "north star" for Nanney, both as chair and professor.

One of the ways that Nanney has been able to help students succeed is by bringing in faculty with new skills and insights that have allowed the department to evolve alongside the world of communication.

"I'm one of 12 faculty, and we have been blessed all along the way for people to come in and make that significant impact in their own way to keep this department strong and pertinent," Nanney said.

Jerald Ogg, Jr., a longtime faculty member at UT Martin and current professor in the MMSC department, says that the department's staff is reflective of Nanney's impact.

"What he's done is hired faculty who love students, who love to teach, and who want to be a part of this hands-on program that catapults students forward. His greatest legacy is everybody up and down this hall," Ogg said.

See NANNEY (pg 4) for continued story

UT Martin holds first advisory board meeting of 2026

Pacer Staff | Chloe Kent

The UT Martin Advisory Board held its first meeting of calendar year at the Boling University Center on Jan. 23, featuring discussions about enrollment, athletics and the election of a new chairperson.

Senior Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Services Petra McPhearson presented an overview of the year-end of the 2025 fiscal year. During her presentation, McPhearson talked about the implementation of the DASH system at the beginning of last year as well as the learning curves that have come with it.

"One of the things that we learned, and we are still trying to grapple with, is finding a better way to manage the budgeting aspect of it and updating changes," McPhearson said.

Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Services Destin Tucker, PhD., presented an update on enrollment and retention.

"I am pleased to report that we exceeded our [enrollment] goal for spring 2026," Tucker said.

The goal for spring enrollment in 2026 was 7,506 students, which includes both undergraduate and graduate students. The total number of students enrolled for the spring semester is 7,602. These numbers can fluctuate a small amount as the official numbers have not yet been released.

UT Martin has introduced different initiatives to preserve their retention rate and increase it.

See ADVISORY (pg 3) for continued story

TIME MACHINE
THIS IS PROBABLY NOT A SMART IDEA, BUT LIFE IS MADE TO LIVE ON THE EDGE RIGHT?
PROCEED WITH CAUTION!
PAST
PRESENT
FUTURE
MAYBE I CAN GO BACK TO YESTERDAY BEFORE I SLIPPED ON ICE IN THE QUAD IN FRONT OF THAT CAMPUS TOUR GROUP.
WELL.. IT DOESN'T LOOK THAT DIFFERENT. I GUESS IT DIDN'T WORK.. PROBABLY A GOOD THING, HONESTLY!
DOES ANYONE WANT TO PLAY POKEMON GO?
1738!
SLAY, QUEEN! THAT'S LIT!
OH NO.. IT DID WORK.. I'M IN 2016. I BETTER GET BACK BEFORE SOMEONE MAKES ME HIT THE QUAN.

(Pacer Graphic / Chloe Kent)

Valentines Word Scramble

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ANSWERS: CUPID, ROMANCE, FLOWERS, CANDY, FEBRUARY

Seek Truth

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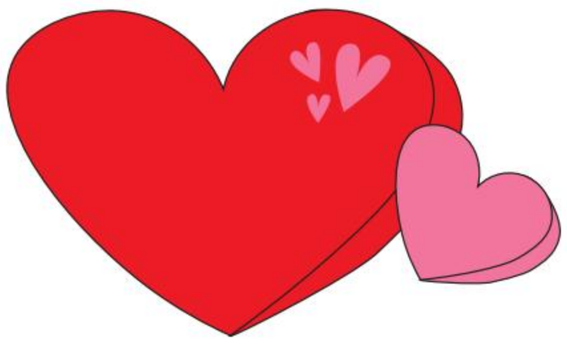

(Pacer Graphics / Miranda Conrad)

Weakley County Sheriff's deputy killed on duty

Marques Rice | Pacer Staff

A Weakley County Sheriff's deputy, Derrick Bonham, was killed early Friday morning at Pocket's Gas Station while investigating a reported shooting near the Days Inn on University Street in Martin, Tenn.

The suspect, identified as Khristi Cunningham, 42, is an Ohio resident, and in the custody of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI). The TBI has formally charged Cunningham with one count of first-degree murder.

According to the Weakley County Sheriff's Office, at 2:52 a.m. Cunningham called the Martin Police Department to report "shots fired" near the Days Inn on 800 University St. and Weakley County Sheriff's Officers reported to assist, after which, Cunningham fired a pistol near the Days Inn parking lot. Cunningham then drove to the parking lot of Pocket's Gas Station while continuing to call 9-1-1 and hang up. Law enforcement personnel were able to track Cunningham's cell phone. As Bonham arrived on the scene, he parked next to Cunningham in her car in the parking lot of Pocket's Gas station, located at 821 University St. Cunningham, who was still calling 9-1-1, brandished a weapon and shot Bonham who was fatally wounded. The deputy was taken to Volunteer Community Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

"(He was) kind, quiet, humble. All about business, the kind of person you want to hire. He never caused an issue or had a problem with anyone," Sheriff Terry McDade said during a press conference on Friday, Jan. 30, 2026.

Bonham was a husband and father to three children. He would have celebrated his two-year anniversary with the department next month.

According to McDade, deputy Bonham spoke with the suspect as she was in her vehicle. As the conversation was happening, the woman opened her car door and shot Bonham. As he fell to the ground, she proceeded to shoot him again.

McDade stated he hopes the suspect receives the death penalty and explained that the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation would be handling much of the case, along with sharing information and findings through the department if necessary.

Grubhub looks to improve UTM's lunch time rush

Marques Rice | Pacer Staff

As UT Martin looks to expand the number of students enrolled, many questions about dining options have begun to arise.

With freshmen being required to purchase a meal plan if they plan to live on campus, many of these students and their parents want to receive more value from the plan they are purchasing.

"Due to my class schedule, it is hard for me to get the benefits of having a (meal) plan since the hours I am not in class, the cafe is either closed or the food court is extremely busy," said UT Martin freshman Travia Brooks.

Many other students have expressed this same sentiment, along with feeling like there are not enough options on campus for dining.

With the remodeling of the food court area came a new collaboration between Grubhub and Sodexo, UT Martin's dining provider. Dylan Davis, field marketing coordinator for Sodexo, stated, "At UTM Dining Services, we want to deliver the best possible value for our students. Using Grubhub allows students to skip long lines and order their meals without waiting. In the future, we hope to expand Grubhub services into other facets of dining services, such as Chick-fil-A."

Grubhub was founded in 2004, but in 2014, it started to take online orders for restaurants and would eventually start doing delivery in 2016. Of course, the question is always there: "Why Grubhub?" Davis responds, "Grubhub has a division known as Grubhub Campus. Sodexo has successfully implemented Grubhub Campus at many other universities, and we felt that it would be a perfect fit for UT Martin's student body."

Since the initiative is still new, many students have been able to use it to its fullest potential, but as time goes on, Davis and Sodexo both hope to have students ordering through the app, allowing for quicker times and fewer lines when it comes to providing food to all students on and off campus.

Along with using credit and debit cards, students can use their Captain's Cash to make purchases on the app. Students can link their Skyhawk IDs to the app and use it to make purchases through Grubhub Campus.

Davis and Sodexo hope to eventually expand the initiative. "We are measuring our success using multiple metrics, such as sales, app downloads, campus registrations and—most importantly—student satisfaction. These metrics allow us to continually adapt and improve all aspects of dining services for the student body."

Students who regularly use the dining services have been enjoying the new additions and getting the most out of them so far. Kiarra Lenell, a senior at UT Martin, stated, "I love not having to wait 30 minutes to get my rice bowl. I would have to set a block of time aside to eat during the day, but now I just order ahead and grab my food between classes."

This new initiative is just one of the many ways UT Martin is looking to improve the quality of life for students. Davis stated, "We simply want students to know about this exciting opportunity to make their campus life more convenient. We have also included a QR code that allows students to easily register with Grubhub Campus using their mobile devices."

GRUBHUB
Next time? No line.
Order ahead with your UTM Grubhub account.
Activate now
Enjoy $0 delivery fees on eligible orders* with free Grubhub+.

Grubhub advertisement at the University of Tennessee at Martin's food court on Jan. 15, 2026. ***(Pacer Photo / Miranda Conrad)***

ADVISORY from page 1

One of which includes offering bridge grants to first-year students from fall 2024 who have lost their merit scholarships. The bridge grant would award them $250 for the fall 2025 semester with the promise that if the student brings their GPA to at least a 2.75, their merit scholarship would be regained automatically. With this, 15 students were able to regain their merit scholarships during the spring 2026 semester.

"We are at or above the average, even with our aspirational peers," Tucker said regarding UT Martin retention rates in comparison to universities of the same size.

Vice Chancellor and Athletics Director Kurt McGuffin gave an update on athletics and how UT Martin athletes are doing academically. The average GPA of all student athletes in the fall 2025 semester was 3.39, with 94 student athletes having a perfect 4.0.

"This is about 500 student athletes, managers and student assistants that we calculate this GPA on," McGuffin said. "...so almost 20% of all [athletics] students got a 4.0 last fall."

The average GPA of a student athlete at UT Martin has had a .34-point increase since fall 2018. McGuffin believes this increase can be attributed to hiring more academic advisers for athletes, along with changing how athletics handled advising.

Along with student athlete progress, McGuffin shared that there is a search for a new Commissioner for the Ohio Valley Conference after Beth DeBauche's resignation. Debauche was named the OVC Commissioner in 2009 and was also the first woman Commissioner for the OVC.

McGuffin also spoke on recent changes to the football and basketball transfer portals.

"It's been very hard for every football staff, and our staff, because we have more mid-year transfers coming into UT Martin for football than we've ever had," said McGuffin. "We've doubled it, maybe even tripled it from our normal years."

Football student athletes had from Jan. 1 to Jan. 16 to enter the transfer portal. This has led UT Martin to spend more money on recruiting during January due to the reduced amount of time they have. Currently, there are around 10,000 football student athletes that are in the transfer portal with 6,000 that have gone unsigned. With basketball, the transfer portal went from having a 30-day window to a 15-day window.

The last thing McGuffin presented on was projects at the different athletics facilities that are in progress and/or have been completed.

The incomplete projects include the pool area in the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center, which closed in 2023. Athletics hopes to convert the pool area into an indoor turf space as soon as they raise the money for it. The turf space would be used for sports such as baseball, softball and soccer. It could also open the opportunity of UT Martin hosting indoor tournaments for those sports.

Chief of Staff Jake Bynum presented UT Martin's strategic plan update that included five goals for the 2026 year: achieve sustainable enrollment growth, enhance institutional reputation, create and enhance physical and virtual spaces, strengthen commitment to West Tennessee and celebrate and promote excellence.

Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts Jeffery Bibbee, PhD. and Director Allen Sterbinsky, Ph.D., announced the launch of the J. Houston & Debbie Gordon Center for Rural Innovation. The center hopes to have potential reach to multiple states, including Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri and Illinois.

The center will bring innovation and opportunity to small rural towns by placing student interns to work and develop these towns as needed. As of right now, there are 17 applicants for the internships with the budget to place eight. These interns will be paid $12 an hour for 120 hours, the minimum amount of hours needed to complete a three-credit hour course.

Nearing the end of the meeting, Sparks announced that they will be nominating a new Chairperson, as this was his last meeting. Weakley County resident Hal Bynum was unanimously nominated and voted in as the new Chairman.

Chancellor Yancy Freeman also spoke about plans for renovations on the Hall-Moody Administration Building, the Business Administration Building and Browning Residence Hall.

While Browning Hall and the Business Administration Building are set to be demolished during the summer of 2026, Hall-Moody plans to reopen in some areas of the building in March, allowing some staff to move back into the building after its close for renovations a few years ago.

The meeting closed with remarks from Chancellor Freeman, where he welcomed new committee member Jennifer Hampton.

"It is a pleasure and an honor to have you here, joining us, so thank you for saying yes," Freeman said.

The next Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2026.

UT Martin hosts Future Skyhawk Receptions

Miracle Brown | Pacer Staff

The University of Tennessee at Martin offers an incredible opportunity for prospective students by bringing UT Martin directly to them.

These events, designed specifically for future Skyhawks and their families, are called the Future Skyhawk Receptions. At these reception nights, students have the chance to meet professors from their future academic colleges, chat with helpful campus resources ranging from financial aid to nursing, connect with student life representatives, meet other future Skyhawks and even be entered to win various scholarships aimed at helping fund their education.

A total of six reception nights are scheduled to take place in various areas across Tennessee, including Jackson, Dyersburg, Memphis, Franklin and Martin. The second reception on Wednesday, Jan. 21, on the UT Martin campus was an overwhelming success.

When asked about the importance of reception nights at UT Martin, Addison Williams, a freshman studying criminal justice and political science who currently serves as a Student Orientation and Registration (SOAR) leader, shared her perspective.

"I believe these events are important, as I did not go to my first reception night," Williams said. "This opportunity not only gives students the chance to learn more about UT Martin, but it also allows me to meet new students and give them the experience I never got to have."

Students who attend these reception nights are accepted UT Martin students. Alexis Barnes is one of these students and aspires to attend UT Martin to study veterinary science. When asked what she hoped to gain from the reception night, Barnes explained that she "wants to understand what field of study I want to go into as it relates to my interests and how UT Martin will help me achieve my career aspirations."

Events like these would not be possible without the dedication of SOAR leaders and the staff within the UT Martin Office of Admissions. Sydney Roney, the current Admissions Outreach Coordinator, holds events like these especially close to her heart.

"I value nights like these," Roney said, "because it is a great way to meet face to face with students and have those students meet face-to-face with their future professors." She went on to explain that seeing students outside of a classroom setting and bringing UT Martin directly to them allows for genuine connections to be created.

Students pose at the Future Skyhawk Reception on January 20, 2026 in the University Center Ballroom. ***(Photo Credit / University Relations)***

With just two more reception nights being offered during the spring semester, it is clear that these events not only help students learn more about UT Martin as a whole, they but also allow them to gain a greater understanding of the kind of people they can become as part of the Skyhawk community.

Remaining reception nights will take place in Memphis, Tennessee at the Litchterman Nature Center on Feb. 12 and in Franklin, Tennessee at the Franklin Marriott Cool Springs on Feb. 17. All reception nights will begin at 6:00 p.m.

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"When you're still in the classroom, you're seeing students, you're talking to students and you're hearing their conversations, which I think helps you make decisions and think through things," Rutledge said.

Her teaching style makes an impact on students. Aubrey Abbott, a junior studying MMSC, appreciates all that Rutledge does for her and others in the MMSC department.

"She has such a big passion for every single thing she does, and she just puts so much energy into it, and that makes it fun," Abbott said.

Abbott explained how Rutledge's Data Storytelling course specifically grew her public speaking and analytical skills through their project called "Hawk Talk," which simulated a TED Talk. She pushes her students to succeed and put forth their best effort.

"Her being enthusiastic, in turn, makes the other professors enthusiastic," Abbott said. "Her enthusiasm has made the communications department a better place."

Her impact doesn't end when students graduate. UT Martin alumnus Dylan Ingram, who now works as a videographer for University Relations, learned a great deal from Rutledge during his time in the MMSC department as an undergraduate and master's student.

"I always liked her classes because they had a lot of real-world experience without it being real-world experience, so you didn't have the high stakes of having to work with a client," Ingram said.

Ingram explained how Rutledge had his class complete a personal branding project where they created a logo for themselves, and he still utilizes that logo for his freelance work today.

"She cares a lot, and she brings a lot of knowledge and delivers it in a very caring, compassionate and genuine way," Ingram said.

Ingram now visits her classes as a guest speaker to share about his role as a videographer on campus.

As Rutledge looks toward the future of the MMSC department, she is focused on growth and staying up-to-date with the industry.

"I think we have an opportunity to move the department forward," Rutledge said.

She is looking at new opportunities not just on campus, but also at the centers and other places the department hasn't been involved with before.

"That's an exciting challenge," Rutledge said.

NANNEY from page 1

Along with the faculty, Ogg says that one of Nanney's biggest impacts is the evolution of the department's curriculum over time.

"If you look back... the curriculum is completely different than what we had when he took over," Ogg said. "His footprint is large; he's got fingerprints all over the curriculum that we now have."

Dylan Sulcer, a junior MMSC major from Nashville, Tennessee, said Nanney cares about his students' success in all aspects, not just academically.

"He cared about my success in the classroom and outside the classroom," Sulcer said. "You could just tell he wanted to make sure you were doing good in life."

Emma Bruner, who works as the social media coordinator for University Relations at UT Martin, is a 2020 graduate from the MMSC department. Bruner's last semester was complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, but Nanney served as a reassurance to students in uncertain times.

"He helped our group of seniors graduating in May of 2020; he helped us through the COVID hurdle," Bruner said. "He was a stable voice of reason through all that, he really stayed on top of things... he was just a big constant encouragement through that."

Because of the relationship Bruner has with both Nanney and the MMSC department, she has been able to give back to current students, which meant a lot to her.

"I just love it so much because of what the department meant to me, and I wouldn't be where I am today without the department's help, with professors like Dr. Nanney," Bruner said.

Though he is stepping down as the department chair, Nanney is not planning on retiring anytime soon. Along with continuing to teach classes, Nanney is taking on a new role as Special Assistant to the College of Humanities and Fine Arts Dean for Capital Projects.

Over his 25 1/2 years of service as MMSC department chair, Nanney is grateful for the people he has met and the relationships he has formed along the way.

"Probably the most rewarding thing about my time as chair and my time in academia is the relations that you form with the alumni, with students, with faculty, with staff," Nanney said. "Life is about relationships, and I'm so thankful for the relationships that I have had the blessing to form and develop through all these years. That means more to me than anything."

Kendrick Lamar shatters Grammys record

Bryant Steele | Pacer Staff

For the past 15 years, Kendrick Lamar has been steadily climbing the ranks of superstardom in the world of hip-hop. From making soundtracks for Marvel movies to hosting last year's Superbowl, Lamar's career contains many accolades. The biggest of these accolades occurred at the 68th Annual Grammy Awards on Feb. 1, 2026, when he won Best Rap Album, Record of the Year, Best Melodic Rap Performance, Best Rap Song, and Best Rap Performance. By adding these five wins to his other 22, Lamar has become the most awarded rapper in Grammy history.

Most of Lamar's wins from this year's Grammy's came from his sixth studio album, GNX. GNX was released on Nov. 22, 2024, which is past the deadline for Grammy submissions. Due to this, Lamar's album only became eligible for nominations for the following year's Grammy's instead. The songs from GNX that won awards were "Luther" and "TV Off". The album itself won the award for Best Rap Album. "Luther" won Record of the Year and Best Melodic Performance of the Year. "TV Off" won Best Rap Song.

"Every time I tell you this," Kendrick said. "Hip hop is always gonna be right here. We gonna be in these suits, we gonna be looking good, we gonna be having our folks with us, we gonna be having our culture with us."

Kendrick's humble response is a staple of his public image by now and his acceptance speech for GNX winning rap album of the year is no exception.

This was not Kendrick's first time getting such a large amount of wins at the Grammys. Just last year, he won five awards for just one song. "Not Like Us", Kendrick's penultimate diss track in his rap beef against fellow rapper Drake, won Record of the Year, Song of the Year, Best Rap Performance, Best Rap Song and Best Music Video. "Not Like Us" was undoubtedly the biggest song to come out of 2024 and very clearly earned its clean sweep. Other songs that Lamar has won multiple Grammys for include: "Alright", "Humble", and "i".

With this achievement under his belt, Lamar has become undeniable as one of the greatest rap artists of all time.

(Pacer Graphic / Darby Self)

Moving forward, he looks to create his first feature film alongside 'South Park' creators Matt Stone. The film is still in production, but the current title is 'Whitney Springs'. Kendrick Lamar's discography will continue to grow for the foreseeable future, bringing many more accolades along with it.

Songs that turn 10 in 2026

Pacer Staff

"7 Years" (Lukas Graham)

It's hard to believe a song titled "7 years" is now 10 years old. This song was released by Danish pop band Lukas Graham and ended up topping the Danish singles chart and reached #2 on the U.S. Billboard's Hot 100 in April 2016.

This song is best remembered for its catchy tune and bittersweet lyrics that help reflect on how quickly life goes by. Its themes resonate with listeners so well that I cannot see it dying any time soon. Even when it's 60 years old, this song will be remembered by older generations and discovered by new ones.

"Don't Let Me Down" (The Chainsmokers ft. Daya)

Another chart-topping hit would be "Don't Let Me Down" by the Chainsmokers. Having been written by a popular electronic duo and pop star, it's not hard to see that this song was and still is pretty popular to this day.

From Daya's memorable chorus of "I need ya, I need ya, I need ya right now/I need you right now" to The Chainsmokers' funky instrumentation, all aspects of the song blend together to make a memorable listen with an odd, yet appealing, music video. This song won't let you down.

"Humble and Kind" (Tim McGraw)

Here's a song that is slow, sentimental and might just bring a tear to your eye. This decade-old classic won a Grammy for Best Country Song and was even nominated for Best Song when it was released.

This song was written by Lori McKenna and teaches the listener to live a life of humility and kindness because that is all that matters in the end. The slow and strong guitar really helps the listener grasp onto the emotions behind the song, securing its position as a modern country classic.

"Starboy" (the Weeknd)

The Weeknd dropped his iconic "Starboy" album on Nov. 25, 2016. With notable songs on the "Starboy" album such as, "I Feel it Coming" and "Party Monster", the song "Starboy" resonated with audiences who already loved his work and had never heard his music before.

This album didn't have a full party vibe to it, but had diverse sounding tracks on it with a nice mesh of artists added onto it. The song "Starboy" had a very mellow, slow beat too it with consistent vocal from the Weeknd himself.

"Can't Stop the Feeling" (Justin Timberlake)

This pop sensation made its rounds for sure with the "Trolls" fandom, coming out on May 6, 2016 with a bang.

It was the lead song to come out with the "Trolls" movie, aiding in its popularity in 2016. The song itself has a very poppy (pun intended) feel to it with Justin Timberlake's powerful voice giving it life.

"Heathens" (Twenty One Pilots)

2016 was a big year for movie track songs. "Heathens" came out along with the Suicide Squad movie and both became a smash hit. You could hear it anywhere on the radio, TV and at the movies. It was an earworm that you couldn't get away from, just like the "Stressed Out" track from Twenty One Pilots in the same time frame.

"Heathens" features recognizable background music that could wake someone in a cold sweat with cheesy lyrics sung by "edge-lords" for years to come.

"Redbone" (Childish Gambino)

Childish Gambino's 'Redbone' has become an iconic track to listen to on a day to day basis. Gambino surprises listeners by trading out his usual upbeat rap tracks by taking on a calmer R&B tone for his "Awaken, My Love!" studio album.

He especially shocks fans by singing in a higher pitch than usual. "Redbone" became Gambino's first number-one single on the Adult R&B chart. It would gain popularity on the internet as a meme that Gambino would acknowledge on stage during a concert. It also gained traction in Hollywood after being used in Jordan Peele's "Get Out."

The clear tribute to 1970s R&B will always be a standout song in the illustrious musical career of Childish Gambino.

"No Problem" (Chance The Rapper, Lil Wayne & 2 Chainz)

Chance the Rapper was on top of the world in 2016 and that all began with the release of his "Coloring Book" mixtape. One of the tracks on "Coloring Book" was "No Problem", a collaboration song that Chance created with fellow rappers Lil Wayne and 2 Chainz.

In the song, the three men explain how their blessings are plentiful. Their prideful tone backed by a gospel choir allows for an enjoyable listen every time this song makes its way on the airwaves.

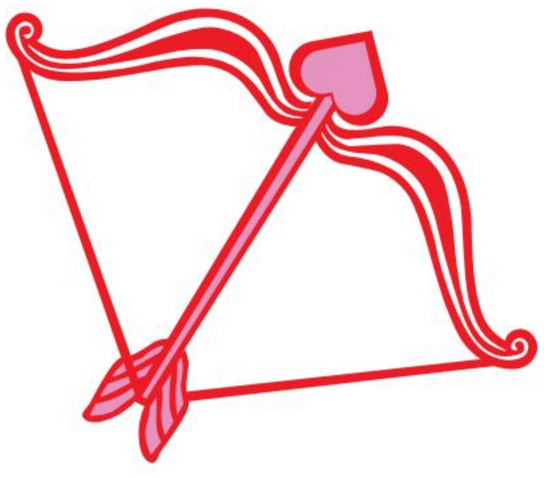
"24k Magic" (Bruno Mars)

One could call "24k Magic" the theme of 2016. There wasn't a school assembly, birthday party or family reunion you could go to without hearing this song.

Bruno Mars struck a gold mine with this track and the album that it's on. The single peaked at No. 4 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in late November 2016. It reached critical acclaim across the board, even winning the Record of the Year award at the Emmy Awards.

Listening to "24k Magic" now causes a nostalgic feeling to wash over those who were able to experience it early after its initial release.

This article was written in collaboration between staff writers Lauren Davis, Bryant Steele and Ethan Tanner.



BEST ROMANTIC COMEDIES POPULAR IN 2016

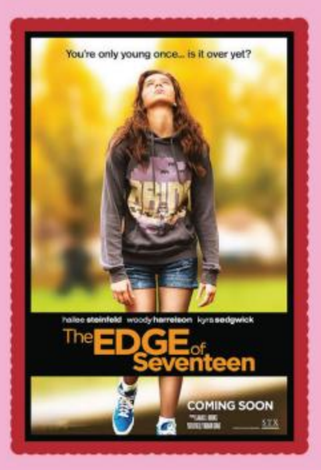
ME BEFORE YOU (2016)

This movie kind of teeters the line of being a rom-com. Louisa "Lou" Clarke loses her job at a cafe and is reaching for any job she can find to help make ends meet. She begins her job as a caregiver to Will Traynor, a paraplegic man. At first, they were not fond of each other, but as time went on, they became inseparable. If you are looking for a movie with a happy ending, this is not the movie. Although it is a very funny movie in some parts, it has a heartbreaking ending.

LA LA LAND (2016)

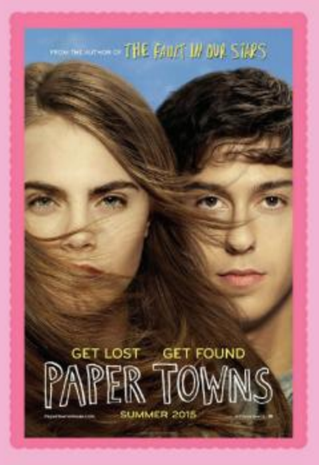
If you like musicals, this one is for you! "La La Land" follows Mia, an aspiring actress, and Sebastian, a jazz pianist. By chance, they end up together for the majority of the movie. Both try everything they can to pursue their dreams. When Sebastian's dream of owning a jazz club isn't working out, he chooses to be the pianist for a 1980s cover band. This angers Mia, as she knows this isn't his dream. After Mia's one-woman show bombs, she says she is moving back home to give up acting. This is when an agent is searching for Mia to give her an audition for a film. I won't spoil the ending, but this also has a somewhat sad ending. Although, this one is more hopeful.

THE EDGE OF SEVENTEEN (2015)



Although this movie wasn't released in 2016, it gained popularity in 2016. Nadine is a 16-year-old in high school who struggles with anxiety and depression. On top of that, her best friend has started dating her older brother. She starts confiding in her teacher, Mr. Bruner. Although this movie does have romantic love, it focuses much more on self-love. Nadine is learning that she needs that love for herself. The movie portrays someone with a mental illness in a great way and brings attention to the struggles that teenagers face.

PAPER TOWNS (2016)



This is also a movie that was released in 2015 but was very popular in 2016. Paper Towns was originally a book by John Greene and then adapted into a movie. Although it is not a direct copy of the book, it is very close. This story follows Quentin "Q" Jacobsen and his neighbor Margo Roth. Spiegelman. Q has been infatuated with Margo since they were kids. They go on a prank-pulling adventure against Margos ex-boyfriend and former best friend.

Pacer Graphic / Chloe Kent

“Heated Rivalry” warms up the rink

Laur Davis | Pacer Staff

(Pacer Graphic / Chloe Kent)

“Heated Rivalry” was initially released on Nov. 28, 2025, on the Canadian network Crave, but the show gained major traction in the United States in late December of 2025 and Early January of 2026.

The show follows male leads Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storrie) and Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) while they navigate their hockey rivalry and heated love affair outside of the public eye. There is a side couple that the story focuses on for an episode, including Scott Hunter (François Arnaud) and Christopher ‘Kip’ Grady (Robbie G.K).

The themes following both relationships are done well for queer representation, especially following the time period of the series. Rozanov appears as a flirty, hard-to-like character with a soft side reserved for the people he cares about. He keeps up a strong front around others for the sake of the game, but when he is depicted alone or with another character that he cares for, he loses that edge that we get used to seeing.

Hollander, on the other hand, is outwardly nice with the tendency to overthink or worry about his career. He takes his hockey career seriously and puts it on top of his list of priorities, but when Rozanov comes about, he becomes more open, but the overthinking still lingers, as shown in their text interactions.

On the subject of their text interactions, the way that the two talked under the fake aliases “Lily” (Rozanov) and “Jane” (Hollander) made for an interesting means of communication. It’s not often anymore that we see people having to use an alias to text people of the same sex anymore when it comes to flirting or dating, but seeing as the story was set in the mid 2010s, it’s understandable.

The way they text is interesting because it really shows their personalities off well. There are multiple times we see Hollander overthinking and rewriting his texts multiple times. There is even one instance where he attempts to text in episode two that they “didn’t even kiss” after one of their meetups.

On the other extreme, Rozanov is usually on the other side, grinning ear to ear after sending these dirty messages. The contrast between the two of them definitely reads as “bad boy vs. good boy” in the best way possible.

The chemistry between the two is well captured and the actors definitely deserve their flowers for their on-camera performance. This is an odd note, but even the more intimate scenes feel intentional and well-paced throughout the series.

After teasing each other over the summer, and throughout most of the hockey season, they get their night together. They must then wait until the next season comes around.

Interactions between Hollander and Rozanov are interesting because they’re such different people playing the same sport for two different goals. The other couple, Scott and Kip, are equally interesting.

They are a really good example of gay intimacy in public. Scott has a hard time coming out and being in a relationship in public with Kip due to his own fears of appearances in his career.

I would argue that one of the best conversations in the series takes place when Kip’s friend steps in for a dance with Scott to have a conversation with him.

In the conversations, she goes on to say that keeping Kip hidden is killing him, and though he would wait for him forever, it doesn’t mean that Scott should make that his reality. The scene was gripping, and it made complete sense for Kip to leave him when he realized that Scott wasn’t going to come out any time soon and planned to keep their love hidden.

Moments with that kind of power are what make this series an outstanding watch. The final episode, “The Cottage,” was phenomenal in its execution, with the two couples accidentally coming out to Shane Hollanders parents, but not to the world. I loved the conversation depicted between Hollander and Rozanov before they made the move to officially come out to Hollander’s family.

I’m looking forward to season two coming out. Hopefully the scenes remain just as impactful and the actors keep up the fantastic work. Crave has set high expectations for this series and it may only be up from here.

‘Mercy’ gives warning of AI

Brandon Mochrie | Pacer Staff

‘Mercy’, released on Jan. 23, 2026, and directed by Timur Bekmambetov, is set in the near future of 2029 in a world where artificial intelligence has taken over part of the justice system.

The film is built around the idea that capital crimes – crimes in which the defendant is typically charged with murder or is at least facing the death penalty – are processed by an advanced AI system that acts as judge, jury and executioner. The concept is interesting enough when taking into account the increasing prevalence of AI in areas from education to medicine and even branching into art.

In this movie, Chris Raven (Chris Pratt) is on trial for the murder of his wife by the AI judge he created . He has access to every electronic record in the city of Los Angeles. Every video, photo and record taken on any device connected to the cloud is accessible to Raven.

Given the widespread use of AI in today’s society, the film had an interesting and relevant topic. The constant plot twists were thoroughly engaging for the majority of the 100 minute runtime and the runtime worked very well alongside Raven’s 90 minute trial time. While it wasn’t a one-to-one of time passing, it was very close. The ticking clock on the trial was another concept that was so engaging.

SPOILERS AHEAD

The ending was especially meaningful, as it revealed how the first case that the AI court handled ended with the sentencing and execution of a man who was innocent. This was due to the actions of a human police officer who wanted to ensure the success and continued use of the AI judge. The irony in the scene was heavy as well, seeing as the person who had become the main antagonist was now a victim of corruption and a system that put AI first.

All this being said, the movie was not faultless. It unfortunately suffered the same issues that any crime or mystery story can suffer. The antagonist tie in was nice, but having it be the best friend could definitely be seen as predictable by the more sleuth-like audience members.

Overall, it was a great movie with an engaging plot and constant surprises that just kept coming, each more shocking than the last. It was an enjoyable theater experience that offers a potential look into the future with the ever expansive use of artificial intelligence.

Grade: 7/10

Most promising games of 2026

Bryant Steele | Pacer Staff

There were many new video games announced in 2025. Some with trailers whilst others were simply announced for a date further down the pipeline. Most of these announcements either came from events like ‘Summer Game Fest’ or Sony’s ‘State of Play’, which were productions that were dedicated to these types of reveals. From these events, we received release schedules for some of the most promising games looking to drop in 2026.

Resident Evil Requiem

Since the end of Ethan Winter’s story in ‘Resident Evil Village’, fans have long wondered where the iconic survival-horror series will go next. That question was answered when, on Jun. 6, 2025, Capcom announced the next entry in the series at the kick-off event for the ‘Summer Game Fest’ livestream.

‘Resident Evil 9’, officially titled ‘Resident Evil Requiem’, follows the story of a new protagonist named Grace Ashcroft as she returns to the ever iconic Raccoon City.

The new entry will also see the return of a series legend when Leon S. Kennedy steps back into the spotlight after not being seen in a mainline release since ‘Resident Evil 6’ in 2012. From what gameplay Capcom has released, the game looks exciting.

See GAMES (pg 10) for continued story.

Romantic love isn't the only kind worth celebrating

Bethany Collins | Pacer Staff

(Pacer Graphic / Darby Self)

College campuses experience a Valentine's Day pressure buildup every February.

People bring gifts to lecture halls while social media shows candlelit dinners, making being single appear as an issue that requires a solution. Students usually survive their first semester through romantic love, but their actual survival depends on their friendships, found family relationships and their ability to love themselves.

Valentine's Day culture pushes an idealized view of romantic love that can leave students feeling inadequate or excluded. The commercial world together with social expectations demonstrate that people believe love originates from someone else who should be your main partner while Valentine's Day marks an important achievement to achieve. Instagram shows users fake content which leads them to compare their actual lives to others, thus causing them to feel anxious and disappointed.

College students find their most important relationships through friendships rather than romantic relationships. Research shows that the best friendships and romantic relationships boost psychological health through distinct processes, yet friendships offer extra emotional backing when romantic relationships reach their breaking point.

Students face academic difficulties while they learn new skills during their college years as they adjust to their college environment. Recent studies show that friends create positive effects which include stress reduction, better academic results, improved campus life adaptation and increased student involvement.

Students who have close friends achieve better mental health outcomes, higher life satisfaction and academic success than what a single romantic relationship would provide.

The essential nature of friendships stems from their ability to provide assistance, which does not require the emotional work and relationship demands that typically come with romantic partnerships. Students who begin romantic relationships tend to experience better well-being, but these relationships bring emotional challenges and stress which students must handle while they discover themselves and their life direction.

This holiday provides an opportunity to test the belief which states that romantic love must remain the primary focus of our emotional experiences. People today celebrate philia, which they refer to as Galentines, because this term describes affectionate, loyal friendships in Greek language.

The celebrations show that love exists in all types of relationships, which include those that exceed traditional romantic bonds. Students develop emotional bonds with their friends, which creates a sense of community that supports them during their academic struggles.

Self-love holds significant value because it enables you to find inner peace while you watch yourself develop and you understand your value exists independently from someone else's focus. Students at college have the opportunity to discover their identity because they are not bound by the need to maintain a long-term relationship during this period of their lives. The area for personal growth allows students to endure their college time while they acquire skills needed to achieve academic success.

Romantic love is wonderful for many, but it shouldn't be the only form of love we celebrate—especially not on a holiday dedicated to connection.

Valentine's Day doesn't have to be about romance. You should honor your friends and your discovered family unit, while also treating yourself to some chocolate. The heartbreak from a Snickers bar remains the only form of heartbreak which no one has ever experienced.

4D movies: a revolutionary experience

Kennan Wilson | Pacer Staff

The only thing better than watching a movie is living one, and 4D movies have got you covered.

4D movies are a relatively new format of movies designed with the goal of helping viewers feel as if they are a part of the action.

This format uses a combination of moving seats and environmental effects that activate in sync with the film. These can include blowing wind, mist, fog, temperature changes and even scents. Technicians program these effects scene by scene, so every gust of wind or spray of mist happens at the same moment as it does on screen.

For those curious, the water effects can be turned off at the cinema if you would like.

The earliest example of what is now known as a 4D movie was Smell-O-Vision in 1960. Invented by Hans Laube, the system released scents during the showing of the film Scent of Mystery. While this was innovative, it had its downfalls. The technology struggled to dispense scents evenly, so it never really caught mainstream attention.

Two years later, Morton Heilig was granted a U.S. patent for the Sensorama simulator. This was an arcade-like machine that users would sit in to watch short films. The Sensorama utilized vibrating seats, aroma dispensers, wind effects and 3D visuals to provide the sensation of being inside the movie. Due to the cost of the technology at that time, mass production was impossible. However, this did lay the groundwork for the immersive cinema experience of today.

Today, 4D films are wide spread across the world, available in more than 65 countries. The largest format is 4DX, which was developed in South Korea by CJ Group.

4DX introduced motion chairs and environmental effects that synchronized with full-length Hollywood films, the most recent being 28 Years Later: The Bone Temple.

In many theaters, the price of a 4D movie is more expensive than a standard movie ticket. On average, they are 56% more expensive than a standard movie ticket and 36% more than 3D tickets.

So, the real question is whether these movies are worth going to over a standard movie.

Some moviegoers argue that it absolutely is.

"I felt like I was actually in the setting of the movie," said Jack Tully, a student majoring in media design. "I felt involved in the story as if I were really there."

Others see the additional features as a drawback.

"It makes the movie very immersive, but it also distracts from the film," said Cecilia Rodriguez, a student majoring in public relations. "I remember watching a film and feeling something from the movie hit me in the back and thinking, 'What just touched me?' It was fun and good, but it can take you out of the movie."

This is the average opinion around the film format. According to Reddit threads, Facebook posts and The Harbinger Online, while most moviegoers see it as an immersive, roller-coaster-like experience that improves the movie, they also see the effects as overstimulating and distracting from the film at times.

Effects like the moving seats, the fog and water are the most common complaints, leading moviegoers to experience discomfort, fatigue, impaired views of the screen and, in a few cases, motion sickness.

So, is it worth it? That is up to you. I won't tell you that you should go to a 4D movie, but give you may want to give it a try. You may find the movies to be truly worth the extra price, or at least you will leave with an experience unlike any you have had before.

Are Flight Crew movie nights starting too late?

Jordan Green | Pacer Staff

The Flight Crew on UT Martin's campus provides students a free movie with complementary food/candy and a drink to promote the movie theatre in Martin, Ciné.

It is a great time to take a break from studying and sit back, relax and enjoy a movie with the added fun of watching it with your college friends.

As someone who enjoys going to these movie nights, I can not help but wonder why they decided to have these movies, most of which do not end until midnight, at 9:45 pm on a Monday and how many of us have to wake up for an 8:00 am class the next day.

I suppose the movies start so late to fit in classes and after-class meetings, but why Mondays specifically and not Fridays? These were thoughts I had while walking back to my car, extremely tired, inspiring me to write this article.

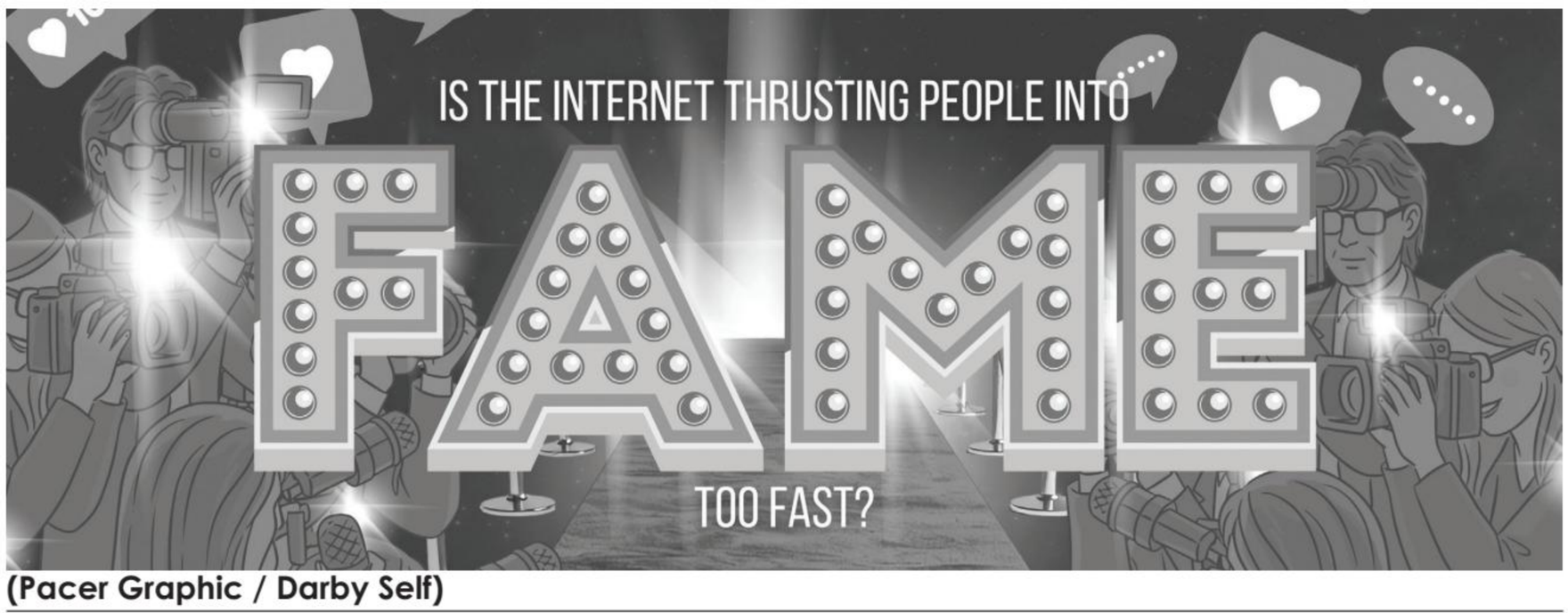
"I believe that the Flight Crew movie times are a little bit too late. Every time that I've ever seen that it's at 9:45, usually I'm either done doing something with a club or studying at that time, but that's also time where I like to wind down, go back to my apartment, and just chill out." said Luke Stepney, a junior vet science major. "I believe that they should be earlier. I think that somewhere around 8 o'clock or 7 o'clock would work better for a lot of students because not many students want to be up past 11:45 to 12 o'clock on a Monday."

Chemistry major Jose Carrizales also pointed out how Monday night movies clash with demanding academic schedules. "Some of us have labs that start at 8 in the morning," Carrizales said. "These movies are a good break from studying, but they should be earlier, maybe around 8 or 8:30."

Students seem to agree that the movie starting time is too late, and even just pushing it up an hour may help with students' schedules. Hopefully, these opinions could be the start towards amending the start times of the Flight Crew's movie nights, which may be beneficial to us all.

Is the Internet thrusting people into fame too fast?

Bethany Collins / Pacer Staff



(Pacer Graphic / Darby Self)

In the age of social media, algorithms make or break who becomes a success and who fumbles, while traditional Hollywood still tries to push the nepo baby narrative down our throats.

Nothing shows the work of how quickly people can become famous like the recent success of "wwwewqHeated Rivalry" stars Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie.

In eight short months, Williams and Storrie went from waiting tables to becoming two of the most talked-about names in Hollywood. One minute they're working shifts, the next they're trending—interview clips everywhere, fan edits stacked higher than the original scenes, paparazzi photos posted before they've even left the parking lot.

And it isn't just "buzz." It's numbers.

Williams was on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" recently, and the interview has already climbed into the millions of views. Storrie followed with "Late Night with Seth Meyers" and saw the same kind of immediate attention. Even more telling: their interviews together routinely pull huge view counts, because the internet isn't just watching their work—it's watching them.

While you scroll through social media and these clips of them on these shows, doing photoshoots and being the talk of one of the biggest award shows of the year, you also see clips of them looking overwhelmed.

The uncomfortable truth is this: the internet doesn't simply discover celebrities anymore. It manufactures acceleration. Algorithms reward constant visibility, and fandoms—sometimes without meaning to—turn admiration into a 24/7 demand for access. It's not that audiences are cruel. The system is designed to press "more" until something breaks.

We used to treat "overnight success" like a fairytale. Now it's a pipeline. And pipelines don't come with pause buttons.

The way for decades, maybe centuries if you wanna go back far enough, of becoming famous was liking walking up steps. You would star in small roles and commercials, build your way to background and extra roles in TV and film, then work your way up to becoming the top billing over years of hard work.

That has changed.

The way of the Tom Cruises, Brad Pitts, Angelina Joilies and Reese Whitherspoons of the world is gone. The internet, and specifically social media, has made it to where anyone can become famous in the blink of an eye.

When you look at traditional Hollywood in the way of Williams and Storrie, "Heated Rivalry" wasn't really expected to be their launch into super stardom. The show was made on a shoestring budget and in a little over a month. The show was produced by a Canadian network, Crave and later HBO Max licensed the show a few weeks before its debut in Canada.

The show is the first true word of mouth hit that has happened in decades.

Luminate, an entertainment industry database, uses numbers taken from the latest digital pipeline - "Heated Rivalry" barely breathed its first step forward last November, only to leap ahead dramatically just before the year-end. This shape fits today's rhythm better: no crawl toward success, instead a quick spark lights up results - TikTok stitches power moments, quick cuts hold eyes, loops of reactions hold interest, while ongoing demands push creators (and bots?) to post more without pause.

Now here's the moment to pause and think - who really benefits when fame rushes like this?

Fame arrives fast, shifting more than careers. It alters who a person becomes in days, not decades. Recently, Storrie talked about how he was almost fired from his serving job when he got the call that he landed the show. Leaps like that feel like stepping into a different world entirely. That change might catch you off guard too.

See FAME (pg 10) for continued story

Anime fans are flocking to newer shows instead of watching the classics

Laur Davis / Pacer Staff

(Pacer Graphic / Adrianna' Carter)

Anime fans are flocking to new shows and leaving the classics in the dust.

Are streaming services making it easier for us to forget about older anime that have been deemed 'old news'?

Those who have been avid anime fans since childhood, no matter the age group, have noticed the dramatic increase in new shows coming out within the last 10 years. Before 2020, there was a common issue with bullying from people outside of the community just for indulging in Japanese animated content. Viewers typically watched it themselves and found communities in either the outside world or on internet forums such as Animo, Wattpad, Quotev, and A03.

After 2020, the rise of streaming service usage and people being locked inside brought on new anime viewers, which blew up these fandom spaces. Something that was once treated as annoying or for weirdos was now being thrust out in the forefront of public attention and deemed cool.Not by everyone for sure, but there is certainly a new wave of viewers starting off on current content and looking for more instead of turning back to the classics. This is not a one-size-fits-all issue with the entire new side of the anime-lover community, but it certainly seems like a majority no matter where you turn.

Production Quality and Animation

After 2020, there came an influx of shows that regained popularity and were being pushed to the front such as "Jujutsu Kaisen", "BNA: Brand New Animal", "Haikyuu", and several other fantastic choices. As these new shows come out, people cannot help but compare the newer quality of shows to the older ones like "Sailor Moon" or other early 2000's options.

Animation was being held to a higher standard as more people began to actually watch anime, and the studios were gradually making higher quality content.

"The increase in quality is alluring with newer anime, but you can't deny the classics," said Toni Collins, a University of Tennessee at Martin student from Memphis, Tennessee. "It's a lot easier to get a hold of newer manga as well instead of finding older stuff. It's hard to find what you're looking for anymore if you decide that you even want to find and own any of the classics."

Social Media

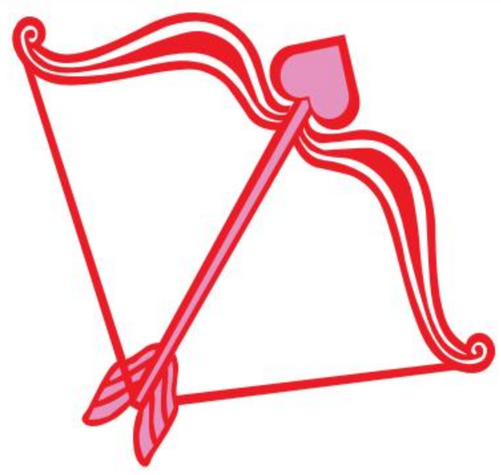
Another major factor that contributed to the growth in newer anime is the major pushes on social media platforms. During the lockdown, no one had anything better to do other than be on social media.

The studios, voice actors, and manga artists all represent their work so heavily on social media, and if you follow even one of them, you gain many updates of not only whatever anime you are currently following, but whatever other shows they are either producing or involved with.

TikTok was a heavy player in boosting interest in anime from skit makers, headcanons people liked to share, clips from the anime or videos from previous panels and conventions. Cosplayers additionally rose up as a hobby during the lockdown and boosted engagement with both the anime community and conventions once they opened back up after quarantine.

Social media is not often shown uplifting older anime unless something major is happening with them, such as an anniversary or something happening with beloved voice actors. Platforms are

See ANIME (pg 10) for continued story



FAME from page 9

The saying "They brought this on themselves." seemingly is becoming less and less true as we move forward in this industry. A person might wish to be normal during walks, still, eyes lock onto them from every side. It's never a choice – fame means the world expects endless parts of you: time, body, private moments, even mood – all handed over without asking.

Still, the internet often hides what looks like care but carries an entitled edge.

People lining up early, shouting tags, racing vehicles, pushing phones at arm's length - they say it's about letting people know they care. Yet noise doesn't make a place safer. Grins don't stop chaos when numbers grow. When a person seems too busy or stressed to handle things, calling it cute misses the point. It ignores what happens when one person pushes past another's limits.

The pedestal is where it breaks down.

Speed comes first, yet surprise follows when someone near the top can't catch a breath. Out of nowhere, lively voices get boxed into invincible roles – fans call them idols, figures of praise – but perfect ones never stumble or shut doors. A single word like "yes" becomes mandatory. They can't vanish for seven days and still be considered a person.

Should they push back? The system hits hard. Next, the process shifts without pause. Viewers start feeling wronged. Then, without warning, people say the person seems unappreciative, standoffish, distant – even arrogant – maybe they just needed a moment alone.

What makes this go beyond Heated Rivalry talks? Think about influencers now. People like Ashby Florence climb fast – her path differs from mainstream TV – yet runs on similar fuel. It's about getting attention, going viral, staying seen, always showing some part of themselves you have to keep up with. That cycle pulls viewers in.

Here's what happens when fame hits too soon. People rush to lift strangers up, calling them geniuses at once. But maybe haste blinds us. Shining lights on unknowns can backfire - pressure builds fast. Still, being pushed under spotlight might sharpen edges quicker than waiting. The rush doesn't always break talent, just timing. Not every meteor survives its own glow.

Celebrity life might push stars to adapt fast, certain individuals claim. True, yet making peace with harm isn't the same as adjusting. Getting accustomed to toxic conditions happens more often than expected. Sometimes a nervous grin becomes normal. Dodging groups takes practice, yet it happens. What starts as realness often ends on a screen. To live well isn't just surviving.

Fame racing nonstop reshapes how success feels. That push turns exhaustion into something expected.

What matters here? Not a word against being a fan. Joy lives in fandom. A space opens through shared love. Art grows from it. Change happens when creators feel seen - like after years, people finally reached out to queer tales worth telling.

Still, help in tough times should lift a person up - not wear them down.

What does "slowing down" really mean in practice?

Leaving paparazzi clips unseen - even when they show someone clearly uneasy. Skipping engagement on intrusive posts. Seeing an actor or artist outside their home isn't exposure, it's respect. Sometimes fame asks too much when promotion comes at the cost of personal space.

Truth is, both fans and companies hold weight here. Streaming sites might think twice before pushing loud, harsh clips. Creators could weave real care options - like stress help - into their promo runs. When shows stop making tired stories go viral, people still play a role - since viewers keep things alive. It isn't the math formula driving things solo. What we praise makes it move.

Upward momentum for Williams and Storrie catches attention. This sort of journey sticks with folks, raw ability, one big show, instant recognition.

That too might show something is off.

Fame moves fast now, not because people lack talent, it's just becoming too frantic to call an honest climb. This rush ignores human limits; it keeps running regardless.

Celebrating fresh faces in music matters not at all. What changes is how quickly we lift them high enough that

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always pushing the new content to the surface and viewers are trying to keep up – it does not give them the time to check out older projects.

Streaming and Accessibility

Streaming jumped up in power during the pandemic and now is a heavy hitter in the film industry. Services such as Crunchyroll jumped to major popularity and is now one of the most used anime streaming platforms after merging with Funimation, Wakanim, and VRV.

When you go onto their streaming site, the newer content is constantly being shoved down your throat. You have the option to go through and dig for the older content, but the chance of what you're looking for being there still isn't 100%.

Pacing and the New Attention Span

It is no secret that attention spans are decreasing as of the year 2026. We have been told in person and in writing on numerous sources that with the newer development in phones and apps like TikTok, we are losing our ability to focus for longer periods of time.

Newer shows have less long-winded pacing and are straight to the point. Just because they are not as drawn out as the classics does not make them inherently bad, just shorter.

Storylines are made shorter and more direct, which some anime fans prefer. It brings us to our final point that pacing absolutely makes a difference in watching. If it does not feel like immediate gratification, or if it doesn't keep you engaged, you are much less likely to watch it until the good part comes.

Older shows like "Bleach" have much longer pacing. Fight scenes feel like they take five episodes before you get into the lore segments, which can make it feel like a waste of time.

Streaming services and anime studios are keeping new fans hounded with new content and lengthening watch lists. It is no wonder that no one has time to watch the classics anymore, especially with all of this good, new content coming out one after the other.

If you feel slammed and guilty for not being able to take the time to watch the classics, we all feel that way. Streaming services want you to pick the newer option so that they can make more space for only the new stuff. Keep the classics alive and watch them – the newer stuff will be there when you get back.

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with 15 runs, 13 singles, four doubles, one triple and nine RBIs. She also had the longest hitting streak of the season with a seven-game streak. Roberts played eight games for UT Martin last season and recorded her first collegiate hit, a triple against Delaware State.

The importance of establishing a routine and finding rhythm as a student athlete is vital. Both Scott and Roberts agree it is necessary for success.

"Figure out a schedule, figure out what you like in life. It's hard because softball's been your life forever, so when you get to college you have to ask yourself what do you want in life after softball. Once you find your passion, definitely go into whatever major ... If you have a passion for what you do, it becomes easier to enjoy learning about it," Scott said.

Scott said it is important to choose a degree you have high interest in as it only makes life easier.

"Don't come into college not knowing what you want to do and picking a major you're not interested in; being a science major is something I really enjoy," Roberts said.

Their coach is of the same mind.

"At the end of the day, you have to have a desire to get better at whatever you're doing if you want to be successful, and grades are just another part of that," Farmer said.

Farmer herself is a UTM alum, pitching from 2009-12. She became a pitching coach in 2020 and contributed to the program's success, with the Skyhawks producing a record of 126-94 (61-45 in OVC play) since she joined the staff. She was named head coach in 2024 and led the team to an impressive 30-win season, the second most victories in the OVC.

The Skyhawks will take flight to Florida for the 2026 Frank Griffin Classic on Feb. 6 for a doubleheader against Indiana State and Stetson.

TRACK from page 11

When speaking on the varying difficulties of the events, Zoe Jones, a freshman nursing major from Anna, Illinois, stated that, "The 400, physically, is really hard and the 800, but I think mentally the hardest could be the longer distance races because you have to be in it for a longer amount of time."

Overall, UT Martin's track and field team gave an outstanding performance at this year's Vanderbilt Invitational. It was a great opening to what will undoubtedly be a phenomenal track season. The Skyhawks gave just a taste of what they have to offer this time around.

GAMES from page 7

Players will switch between Leon and Grace throughout the story, a concept that's been explored since 'Resident Evil 0' in 2002. With different mechanics and a fresh, new story, 'Resident Evil Requiem' looks to bring fans back into one of gaming's most popular franchises once it is released on Feb. 27, 2026.

RESIDENT EVIL

Players will switch between Leon and Grace throughout the story, a concept that's been explored since 'Resident Evil 0' in 2002. With different mechanics and a fresh, new story, 'Resident Evil Requiem' looks to bring fans back into one of gaming's most popular franchises once it is released on Feb. 27, 2026.

007 First Light

Fans saw the end of Daniel Craig's take on James Bond in 2021's 'No Time To Die'. Since then, there has been a vast absence of everyone's favorite British Secret Service agent. That changes when developer IO Interactive's '007 First Light' releases on May 27, 2026.

'007 First Light' is a third-person action video game that will focus on James Bond's quest to earn his license to kill. Being an origin story of sorts, fans will once again get to step into the shoes of Agent 007 for the first time since '007 Legends' in 2012.

Gaming wise, the franchise is in good hands since IO Interactive is notable for making the 'Hitman' series of games. Hopefully, this foray back into the world of James Bond will satiate fans until the release of the next film

Marvel's Wolverine

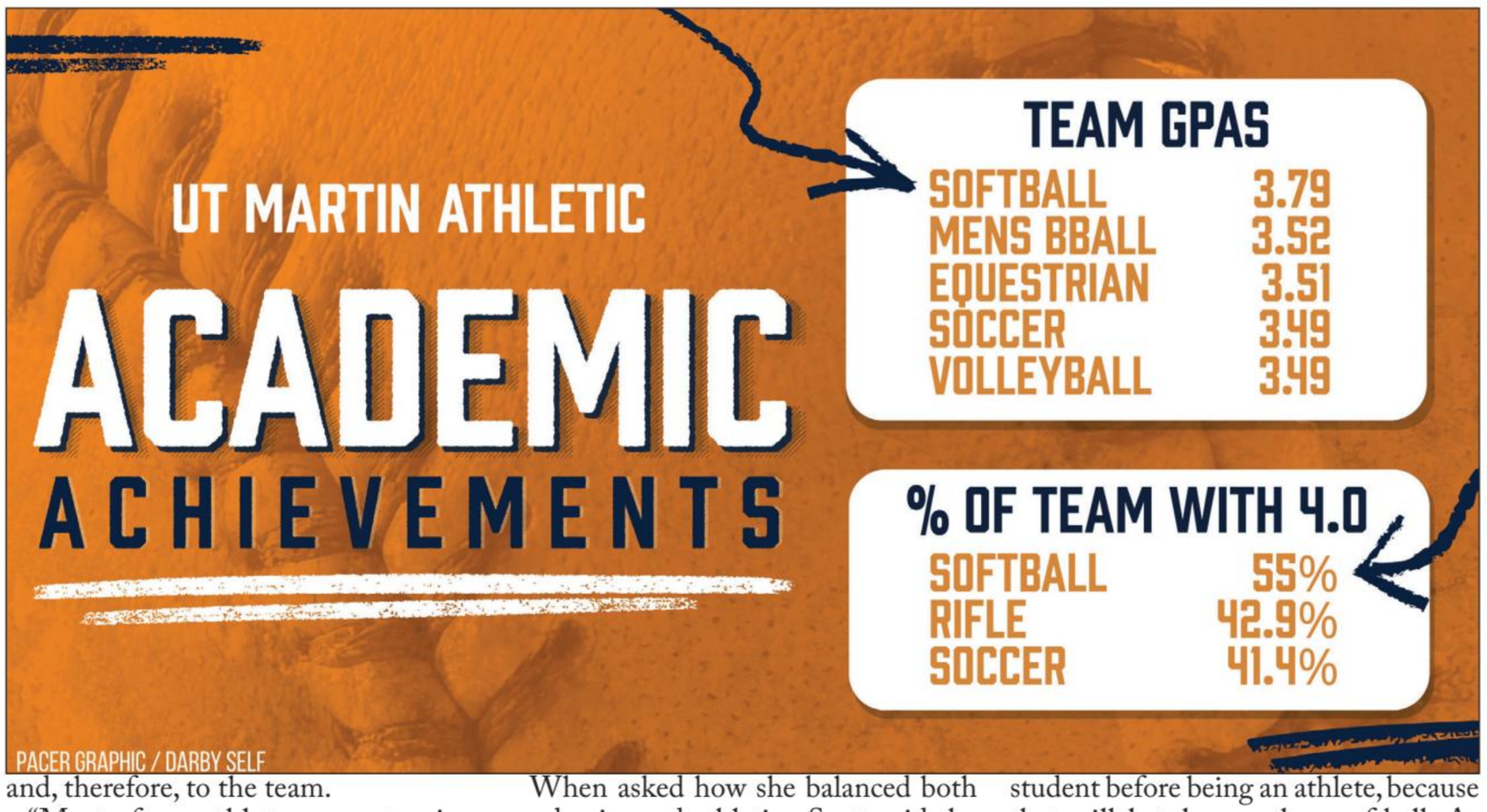
With the success of their 'Marvel's Spider-Man' game franchise, developer Insomniac has decided to journey away from the domain of the wall-crawler for a closer look at another iconic Marvel character. 'Marvel's Wolverine' will follow the titular character as he travels around the world. Details about the story haven't been revealed yet, but the game's overview tells fans that it will follow Wolverine as he looks for answers about his past.

There hasn't been an exact release date announced yet, but Insomniac has stated that it will likely release in either Q3 or Q4 of 2026. One thing is for certain: many fans will enjoy "snikting" their way through Wolverine's rouges gallery.

visit thepacer.net for the full list

UT Martin softball holds highest GPA among student-athletes

Isaiah Murphy | Pacer Staff



The UT Martin softball team has the highest GPA among student-athletes at the university (3.79) with more than 50% of the team carrying a perfect 4.0.

For senior Dylan Scott and sophomore Addie Roberts, the academic success is due, in part, to competitiveness.

"I have more of a competitive nature in me," Scott said. "If someone says they got this on a test … I better get a better grade. I know it just keeps me honest and better."

Scott is currently pursuing a degree in health and human performance, while Roberts pursues veterinary science.

"I'm very competitive when it comes to my grades; it's bad," Roberts said. "I want to have the best grade. I want to brag about it to everybody I'm in class with."

Scott and Roberts are no strangers to being recognized for academic success. Scott was named to the athletic director's honor roll (Fall 2023, Spring 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2025) and the OVC Commissioner's Honor Roll in 2023-24 and 2024-25. Roberts was named to both the athletic director's honor roll (Fall 2024 and Spring 2025) and the OVC Commissioner's Honor Roll in 2024-25. Both players have received academic OVC Medals of Honor.

Head Coach Chelsea Farmer said academics are very important to her and, therefore, to the team.

"Most of our athletes are not going to play professionally. So grades and your academic life are going to last a lot longer than your softball life. It's important to me that our players understand that," Farmer said. "When we're looking at high school players, I'm wanting to find players that care about their grades. If you care about them, then you're going to work hard on your own, then I don't have to force you to work hard."

When asked how she balanced both academics and athletics, Scott said she treats school like a career.

"I would say it's like a job. You're expected to do both. I really harp on being a student before being an athlete. You have to put in the work to be a student before you can put in the work outside of the classroom," Scott said.

Her teammate, Roberts, was in full agreement with Scott. School is the priority.

"I'm always going to put being a student before being an athlete, because that will last longer than softball. As soon as I get done at practice, I'm going home and I'm studying. If I wake up before my alarm, I'm getting out my computer and I'm studying. In between classes, or if I get to practice a little bit early, I'm getting out my laptop and I'm studying. My life is just softball and school," Roberts said.

See SOFTBALL (pg 10) for continued story.

Track & Field sets records at Vanderbilt Invitational

Bryant | Pacer Staff

Through sheer determination and skill, an impressive five new school records were set by the UT Martin track and field team.

New record holders include: Issac Boles, Khalid White, Abbie Lloyd, Angus Monro and Luke Johnson. These Skyhawks honed their skills and, after applying that to their respective events, were able to break former school records.

Isaac Boles set his second school record in just as many weeks with an 8 minute 11 second 60m hurdle which landed him 5th in the competition. Abbie Lloyd also set her second record in back-to-back weeks with a 3.10 meter pole vault which landed her in 15th. Khalid White blazed past the school record in the 400m with a 48.40 second time that secured him a 6th place finish. Angus Monro set the school record in the mile with a 4 minute 7.28 second effort that landed him at 6th. Finally, Luke Johnson set the school record with an 8 minute 14.78 second time that landed him at 16th in the 3k.

Other notable performances included David Stuckey with a PR in the mile (4:09.11), Danielle Mudd with a PR in the 3k (10:26.08), Morgan Mitchell with a PR in the 400m (59.20) and Grayson Ballenger with a PR in the long jump (6.46m).

On the weekend of January 17, Vanderbilt University held their annual "Vanderbilt Invitational" event.

Gabby Brown competes for the University of Tennessee at Martin at the Vanderbilt Invitational on Sat, Jan 17, 2026 in Nashville, Tenn. **(Pacer Photo / Darby Self)**

The Vanderbilt Invitational invites collegiate-level athletes from different schools across the state of Tennessee to compete in a wide variety of track and field events. This includes events like shot put, the 400 meter sprint and long jump among many other challenging trials. UT Martin's track and field team was one of the many squads able to participate in this contest.

Whilst the athletes were warming up, the tension in the air was palpable. Both competitor and audience alike were excited for the showcase of physical prowess that was just seconds away from occurring. Each athlete used their time wisely, mentally and physically preparing themselves for the competitions ahead.

"We just started training block after cross-country. So, we're kind of raising up to our highest mileage so we're kind of training through indoor. So it's been a lot of like intensity. We're on one of our highest weeks right now. So, this race is kinda coming out a little sore because we're in our highest training block," says Sophia Cahill, a freshman Biology major from Lexington, KY, when asked about the training regimen the team underwent going into the Vanderbilt Invitational.

Although they were soaring high, our Skyhawks faced some tough competition across the board. One such challenger was the University of Tennessee at Knoxville's Mary Ogwoka.

Not only did the Kenya native fly through her opponents with relative ease, but she even set a new all-time freshman record for the Lady Vols. Observing inspiring competitors, like Ogwoka, from different schools is always a highlight of competing against opposing universities from across the state.

When asked about her favorite part of travelling to these different schools and facing a multitude of varying athletes, Annie Burns, a freshman education major from Soldotna, AK, passionately responded, "The diversity and seeing a bunch of different competition that are just like, known for being really strong athletes is cool to compete against."

The grueling process of which these gladiators compete can sometimes be too much for one to handle. This can result in irritated muscles, shortness of breath, or even vomiting. Some events are harder on the body and mind than others, it just depends on how much one can take before exhaustion.

See TRACK (pg 10) for continued story.

Culture and energy fuel Skyhawks to 17-5 start

Nate Szarzynski | Pacer Staff

After a tough first year for Head Coach Jeremy Shulman and the UT Martin Skyhawks, the team has found its stride in year two.

Following a 14-19 finish last season, UT Martin has already surpassed its win total from Shulman's first year at the helm with a 17-5 record. This slots the team at 1st place in the Ohio Valley Conference with only a month left to play in the regular season.

Shulman and his staff have been able to instill a system and culture that failed to gain traction in his first season with the team. After some roster changes in the offseason, Shulman's unselfish, positionless basketball game plan has clicked with his young players.

Skyhawks' general manager and assistant coach Jawaan Holmes said his players have bought into a culture of making the extra pass.

"We want assisted points. It's fun to play in a system where the culture is to pass the ball and everyone else gets to eat," said Holmes. "The ball moves and everyone gets to eat. We call it energy. The ball has energy and it gives the team energy."

UT Martin entered this season with only five contributors returning from the previous team. Shulman brought on nine new players to his program with many of the new faces contributing greatly to the team's success this season.

Notable new players include multi-time OVC Freshman of the Week, forward Matas Deniusas, who has started all 22 games for the Skyhawks so far. Deniusas averages 12.9 points, 5.4 rebounds, and 1.7 assists per game this season.

Another new player who has made his presence felt is freshman guard Filip Petkovski. Petkovski has assumed the role of primary ball handler in Shulman's offense in late game situations, which shows the confidence the UT Martin coaching staff has in the young player.

Of the returning players, one has made huge strides. Junior forward Andrija Bukumirovic has grown into a budding star in the OVC. Bukumirovic averages 14.8 points, 8.3 rebounds, and 1.0 assists per game this season in a system that prioritizes many over one. In addition, Bukumirovic has shot a highly efficient 54.5% from the field this season.

After a snow-filled hiatus, the Skyhawks returned to the road to take on the Eastern Illinois Panthers in Charleston. Even following a loss, the blistering cold weather did not ice the Skyhawks as they found their way to a 76-68 win over the OVC rival Panthers.

After entering halftime tied 37-37, the Skyhawk began to separate

UT Martin's Matas Deniusas (44) drives the ball while being guarded by SIU's Drew Steffe (21) on Dec. 10, 2025 at Banterra Center in Carbondale, Ill. ***(Pacer Photo/Kayli Plotner)***

Skyhawks offensive efficiency was the story. They shot 53% from the field and 39% from beyond the arc, all in route to a eight point road victory.

Freshman Guard Damien King played a large role in the victory adding 17 points on 87.5% shooting.

UT Martin returned to the road Saturday to take on the Western Illinois Leathernecks. Following the momentum from the EIU game, The Skyhawks dominated the Leathernecks with a final score of 84-44. The Skyhawks had six players score eight or more points in the blowout.

Leading the charge for the Skyhawks was Petkovski with 17 points and eight rebounds. Another highly efficient night for Shulman's team results in another Skyhawks win. UT Martin shot 52% from the field and out rebounded the Leathernecks 41-20.

UT Martin Womens' Basketball prepares for big stretch of games

William Stevens | Pacer Staff

The UT Martin Skyhawk women's basketball team and head coach Kevin McMillan currently hold a record of 11-10, with only Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) opponents remaining here is what is ahead for the Skyhawks.

Led by redshirt junior guard Kenley McCarn, averaging 16.1 points and 5.3 rebounds per game, the Skyhawks have had their ups and downs to this point. At home the Skyhawks are 7-2, just 4-8 on the road, and 7-5 in the OVC. The Skyhawks were back in action at home on Tuesday Feb. 3, 2026 against the Little Rock Trojans but ended their winning streak, falling 68-53. The Trojans outshot the Skyhawks, 41.0 % to 32.7 %, as well as out-rebounded them by 20. Zy Thompson led UT Martin in scoring with 13 points, while Sidni Middleton and Brittani Wells added 11 and 10 points, respectively.

Following the Trojans matchup, the Skyhawks remain at home taking on the Southern Indiana Screaming Eagles on Thursday Feb. 5, 2026, for faculty and staff appreciation night. Against the Screaming Eagles, UT Martin is 3-5 all time with the last matchup Being a loss 52-43 led by McCarn with 17 points and eight rebounds. Baring a win against Little Rock, the Skyhawks look to keep the home win streak alive and get revenge against Southern Indiana.

Before hitting the highway, the Skyhawks have another home game this time on Saturday Feb. 7, 2026, against the Morehead State Eagles. Against the Eagles, the Skyhawks are an even 33-33 all time and have a two game losing streak. The last matchup fell in the hands of the Eagles 67-49. Leading the Skyhawks was sophomore forward Zy Thompson with 16 points.

This time around the Skyhawks find themselves on the road Against the Lindenwood Lions. The

UT Martin sophomore forward Zy Thompson (#12) shoots over an SIUE defender during the Jan. 15, 2026 game at the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center in Martin, Tennessee. ***(Pacer Photo / Kaniya Anthony)***

Skyhawks hold a 3-4 record against the Lions all time with the last matchup going UT Martin's way 73-70 and a 40 point outing by McCarn. Here the Skyhawks look to improve their away record to 5-8.

The Skyhawks then find their way to Edwardsville, Illinois, on Valentine's day searching for a repeat win against the SIUE Cougars. The Skyhawks have had the Cougars number with a dominant all time record of 25-8. The last matchup went UT Martin's way 64-55 with McCarn leading the way, totaling 15 points and nine rebounds. Thompson also shined in this contest with 10 points in just 18 minutes.

As the Skyhawks and Coach McMillan continue to adjust roles and rotations, UT Martin is on track for their best season since 2021.